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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IT](#) [EUN](#) [MEPP](#)

SUBJECT: EU GAERC AND COUNCIL - ITALY ON BOARD WITH US
POSITIONS ON MEPP, IRAN/IAEA, BALKANS

REF: STATE 57444 B) ROME 1100

Classified By: POLMIN TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON:1.5 (B)(D)

Guidance Request - See para 8

1. (C) SUMMARY. Italy is on board with US views presented ref A. Our interlocutors predict that statements in draft for next week's General Affairs External Relations Council (GAERC) and European Council (Heads of State) meetings will reinforce the need for US-EU solidarity on Balkans and Mideast Issues. Ref B reports Italy's response to reftel points on terrorism and terrorist financing. Italy believes the feasibility studies leading to the EU Balkans Stabilization and Association process are more effective tools than CARDS to promote cooperation with the ICTY. The GAERC concluding statement will include language condemning renewed violence in Kosovo and urging Pristina and Belgrade to restore order. Italy and the EU strongly agree with reftel points calling on Iran to comply with IAEA commitments, including allowing immediate resumption of inspections of all nuclear facilities. Italy and its EU partners are delighted and relieved to see the US so actively reengaged in MEPP. END SUMMARY.

Balkans

2. (C) MFA Balkans Office Director Fernando Gentilini told Poloff that Italy fully supported USG views (ref A) that the US and EU must speak with one voice regarding Belgrade's cooperation with the ICTY. The EU would not, however, link continuation of the CARDS process to that cooperation. According to Gentilini, the feasibility studies leading to the EU Stabilization and Association process could be used far more effectively as a tool to promote cooperation with the ICTY as well as progress across a wide range of political and economic areas. He predicted that funds distribution to Serbia related to CARDS would be approved at the GAERC. Should conditions remain the same, Belgrade would not receive a positive signal from the next feasibility study.

3. (C) Gentilini said that Italy would support a strong GAERC concluding statement that emphasized ICTY cooperation. Similarly, Serbian PM Kostunica's visit to Brussels immediately following the GAERC also afforded the EU an opportunity to express concern over the slow rate of progress on a number of issues, including Kosovo. Note: At the time of this conversation Gentilini was unsure whether breaking events in Kosovo would cause Kostunica to cancel his Brussels trip. Nonetheless, added Gentilini, the GAERC concluding statement would include language condemning the violence on both sides and urging the authorities in Pristina and Belgrade to act responsibly, rapidly, and cooperatively with KFOR and UMMIK to restore order. End Note.

4. (C) Gentilini said that the EU was progressing favorably in drafting implementing language to freeze assets of ICTY indictees (Karadzic, Mladic and Gotovina) and their supporters, but was not optimistic that the final document would be ready for approval at the March 22 GAERC.

Iran

5. (C) Mideast Gulf Office Director Luigi Maccotta told poloff that Italy and the EU strongly agree with reftel points calling on Iran to comply with IAEA commitments, including allowing immediate resumption of inspections of all nuclear facilities. Maccotta had been reviewing draft language prepared by the EU PSC, and was hopeful that it could be in final form in time for approval by EU FMs at the GAERC. He predicted that the US would be pleased with its substance and tone.

6. (C) Maccotta added that while the international community must remain tough and vigilant regarding Iran's nuclear program, it must also continue to engage the Tehran regime. Iran plays an important role in regional stability, and thus far had not undermined efforts to rebuild Iraq. Maccotta said that the ICs message of nuclear restraint must be unconditional, but should be accompanied by offers to Iran to

participate in regional initiatives, such as the GME. Dialogue, high level political visits and trade arrangements were also helping to keep communications channels open.

MEPP

17. (C) MFA Eastern Mediterranean Deputy Office Director Luca Fratini said that as of the afternoon of March 18 he had seen no draft conclusions on MEPP or unilateral disengagement from Gaza, so was uncertain as to whether these issues would make it to the table next week in Brussels. He said that Italy and its EU partners are delighted and relieved to see the US so actively reengaged in the region. He cited Amb. Ott's March 10 Quad briefing as particularly helpful and encouraging.

18. (C) Fratini also encouraged the US to continue to assure European allies that the GME is not a replacement for or dilution of the USG's involvement in the ongoing MEPP. He admitted that there had been some concerns along those lines both in Brussels and Rome. Italy believes that efforts to break the stalemate can only succeed if the EU and US speak with one voice. Italy supports in principle Sharon's disengagement plan, and is looking forward to receiving more details on implementation. He agreed that any such moves must fit within the roadmap framework. Fratini wondered whether the USG was beginning to think about an international "monitoring mission" in Gaza once Israel withdraws. Poloff promised to pass along Fratini's question to Washington.

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